

On Christmas morning children all over the world will wake up and head for the Christmas tree. They'll eagerly open their presents and then burst into expressions of happiness. Most will remember to thank their parents and others who gave them their gifts. Then they'll turn their focus back to their new toys, games, clothes, candy, books, and whatever else they received.

The joy that comes as we receive God's gift of His Son is similar to the happiness a child experiences on Christmas morning. We appreciate the gift, and we express our gratitude to the giver. But the joy of Christmas doesn't stop there.

Let's look at Mary's response to God's gift when she entered the house of her relative, Elizabeth.

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Luke 1:46-55 (TNIV)

Mary began by expressing her joy and thankfulness for what God had done for her. Then she spoke of His greatness and the blessings He had given, not just to her, but to all of His people. Mary referred to God in every verse in this passage. She began and ended with God. We often start with the gift, turn to the giver, and then return to the gift. Mary started with the giver, turned to the gift, and then returned to the giver. Mary focused her joy on God!

The joy of Christmas begins and ends with God. He's the source of our joy and the object of our gratitude. He's also the gift itself. Christmas is about the God who gave Himself to us! He's the focus of our joy.

Reflection and Discussion

- Where do you focus most of your attention during the Christmas season?
- What helps you to turn your focus toward God?

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank You for giving Yourself to us at Christmas. You're the giver of the gift, and You're the gift itself. You're the source and object of our joy. May our hearts be filled with joy and our mouths with words of praise. You deserve all of our attention. You deserve all of our thanks. May we focus our joy on You.

Amen.